

4.139



THE MAID OF MONNOW.

"O, Mistress, villainy hath made mocks with love."

"For signs, for seasons, and for years,"
The bright stars hang on high,
And it is said those omen-aphetes
Mark mortals' destiny.

Though few can read the mystic lore
Engraven on the skies;
Yet, there are those who dare explore
Its hidden mysteries!

And she was one, that Sibyl dark,
Who drew aside the veil,
And read in some prophetic spark
The Maid of Monnow's Tale.

That gentle Maid, she joyed to rove
By Monnow's silvery stream,
And hear the night bird's song of love;—
Her own divinist theme.

For she could chaunt as sweet a lay
As pensive Philomel,
And none could turn the bar away
From her soft music's swell.

That Maiden, as one Autumn's eve
She roamed the streamlet's side;
Ere yet her thoughts had learned to grieve,
Or ere her heart had sighed;

The wild-flowers from the velvet green,
She culled with girlish glee,
And sang—she thought unheard, unseen,
Her wonted melody.

But, mark beside her, dark and grave,
The magic Sister stand,
Adown her cheeks black ringlets wave,
And in her withered hand

The wand that points the weal or woe,
Of all who trust her skill;
And e'er are pleased alike to know
Life's future good or ill.

Eliza viewed, with wild alarm,
The unexpected crone,
And felt the while some secret charm,
That chilled her heart to stone.

She sighed with fear, and as she gazed,
The stranger silence broke,
Yet scarce above a whisper raised
Her voice, as thus she spoke,

"Sweet girl! be happy, and to-day,
With flowrets deck thy brow;—
Thou could'st't then sing thy life away,
How blest in truth wert thou!

'Tis morning with thy beauty yet,
But who can tell what gloom
(Before thy life's short Sun shall set,)
May cloud thy future doom?

'Tis She who reads the starry scroll,
Can to thine ear relate,
What changes o'er thy path shall roll,
What darkness veil thy fate.

Hear then, the secrets of thy life
Unfolded, and beware;—
For future years, with sorrow rife,
Thy tender heart prepare.

Beware! for though thou hast the charm
"To sooth the savage breast,"
That only, chance, may serve to arm
The foe-man of thy rest.

Thine elder, One shall court thy song,
And weave fond notes with thine,
How wilt thou hear, and, deeply wrong,
Believe those notes divine.

And when love's buoyant strain is passed,
The dirge of sadder tone,
Plaintive and low, will come at last,
Mingled with many a groan,

An outcast, friendless, it may be,
A pauper thou shalt roam,
And they will mock thy poverty;
Who should have blest thy home.

"Disreputable," will they call
The victim—none but thee;—
And then thou scarce wilt fathom all
The depths of perfidy.

A wife!—yes, other means destroyed
Thy lover uses this,
And where in truth should be enjoyed
All of terrestrial bliss;

Within the sacred, wedded home,
Confiding, trusting still;
There to thy bitter grief shall come
Perchance the deepest ill.

He, who in youth's gay hour of pride,
Thy first affections drew;
Now takes thee for "his own loved bride;"
And acts the traitor too!

Yes he, who father, brother, friend,
Yea more than these should prove,
Turns with a curse thy heart to rend,
And spurns thy faithful love.

Then, fiend-like will he hail the world,
To blast thine injured name;
But back upon him shall be hurled
The curse of Public Shame.

Thus Child, if fortune frown on thee,
Fame shall preserve thee still;
Then say not all in heaven we see
Portends of mortal ill."

The Sibyl vanished;—after years
But proved the warning true;—
I may not tell the sighs, the tears,
Which poor Eliza knew.

The world of some, perchance may hear,
Then let it learn from those,
To drop the sympathetic tear,
And shield her in her woes!